

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 16125

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TAGS: PFOR, UK, SP, GI

SUBJECT: SOME FCO VIEWS ON GIBRALTAR

REF: A) LONDON 14567, B) USUN 5684

SUMMARY: BASIC TENET BRITISH POLICY ON GIBRALTAR REMAINS INSISTENCE THAT BRITISH WILL NOT TAKE ANY ACTION IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH SPAIN THAT IS NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXPRESSED PREFERENCE OF THE GIBRALTARIANS. IN THIS CONNECTION, BRITISH HAVE FREQUENTLY CITED SPANISH RESTRICTIONS OF MOVEMENT INTO AND OUT OF GIBRALTAR AS A BAR TO CONSTRUCTIVE NEGOTIATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. FCO DESK OFFICER GAVE EMBOFF A BRIEFING ON GIBRALTAR DECEMBER 4 AND SUBSEQUENTLY PROVIDED HIM WITH COPIES OF FCO DOCUMENTS.

2. BRIEFING TOUCHED UPON UN INVOLVEMENT IN GIBRALTAR QUESTION, BUT FCO VIEW IS THAT ISSUE IS BASICALLY TRIANGULAR RATHER THAN MULTILATERAL. IN FCO OPINION, PAST EFFORTS TO GET SETTLEMENT OF GIBRALTAR QUESTION HAVE RUN ASHOAL ON SPANISH POLICY OF STRICT BORDER CONTROLS, IN-
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CLUDING BAN ON TRAVEL ACROSS SPANISH BORDER, REGULATIONS

ON USE OF AIRSPACE, AND SPANISH INTRANSIGENCE ON OBSERVING RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES AND WISHES OF GIBALTARIANS.

3. QUERIED AS TO WHETHER BRITISH OPINION MIGHT CHANGE GRADUALLY OVER NEXT FEW YEARS AS SPAIN MOVES TOWARD A MORE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY, FCO VIEW WAS THAT BRITISH OPINION WOULD NOT CHANGE UNTIL OPINION OF GIBALTARIANS CHANGES. POPULAR REFERENDUM HELD IN GIBALTAR IN 1967 WAS OVERWHELMINGLY IN FAVORING OF RETAINING TIES WITH BRITAIN RATHER THAN OF CHANGING STATUS, AND THERE HAD BEEN LIKELY FEW CHANGED OPINIONS IN THE INTERVENING PERIOD BECAUSE OF THE REACTION OF GIBALTARIANS TO SPANISH BORDER AND AIRPORT ACTIONS, WHICH WERE SEEN AS THREATENING.

4. IN SPITE OF THE SENSITIVITY OF THE PRESENT LABOR GOVERNMENT TO CHARGES THAT ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH GIBALTAR IS PURE COLONIALISM, IN DEFIANCE OF CITABLE UN PARAGRAPHS IN A NUMBER OF RESOLUTIONS CALLING FOR DECOLONIZATION OF GIBALTAR, AND IN SPITE OF GENERAL OPINION THAT EVOLUTIONARY CHANGES ARE TAKING PLACE IN SPAIN WHICH WOULD IMPROVE THE OPTICS OF TRANSFERRING GIBALTAR IN THE FUTURE TO A NON-FRANCO SPAIN, THE FCO IS CONVINCED THE LABOR GOVERNMENT WILL NOT NEGOTIATE A NEW STATUS FOR GIBALTAR WITHOUT AN EXPRESSION OF A CHANGED OPINION ON THE PART OF THE CITIZENS OF GIBALTAR.

5. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT BE GLAD TO RID ITSELF OF THE EXPENSES INVOLVED IN KEEPING GIBALTAR AFLOAT, THE FCO ANSWER IS THAT GIBALTAR IS NOT ALL THAT EXPENSIVE AND IN REALITY COSTS VERY LITTLE. ASKED ABOUT RECENT ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE PRESS (REFTEL A), THE FCO OFFICIAL SAID THAT THERE WAS REALLY NOTHING NEW IN THE EXCHANGE; THE 1973 SPANISH PROPOSALS REFERRED TO HAD BEEN MERELY A RE-EXPRESSION OF OLD VIEWS AND POLICIES WITHOUT EITHER AMELIORATION OF THE BORDER SITUATION OR A FIRM COMMITMENT TO THE SPECIAL STATUS OF GIBALTARIANS BEFORE ANNEXATION OF GIBALTAR. ASKED WHETHER GIBALTAR MIGHT NOT EXPERIENCE A "DRAW-DOWN" IN TERMS OF REDUCED EXPENDITURES FORECAST IN THE DEFENSE REVIEW, THE FCO SAID

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NO CHANGES ARE FORESEEN ON THE LEVEL OF THE BRITISH MILITARY PRESENCE IN GIBALTAR.

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